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Portland - OR - 97206

EPA-REGION 10

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U.S. EPA
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I have lived in Portland for more than 30 years. I have served as neighborhood president, and my wife is also active in neighborhood issues, serving as chair and president for the Linn urban renewal project for 10 years. I have serious concerns with the Portland Harbor plan. Nature has a process of cleaning and filtering water through its natural flow. If it is unnaturally disturbed by people, it takes the cycle into a destructive pattern that might take decades to fix. Unearthing toxins that have already been buried would expose cleanup workers to unnecessary danger. From working in the heavy equipment industry, I know protective clothing can minimize the risk, but there is always a risk. It is not right to ask workers to take this chance for no reason. I also know a little bit about dredging. It should only be used in the worst-case scenario. The Army Corps of Engineers practices exactly the right approach, letting nature do as much of the work as possible and dredging only where necessary.

Serious environmental damage should be addressed, but the EPA always carries it too far. There can be a happy medium, but I've never found it since I moved to Portland. I was actually put out of business because of the spotted owl. I used to sell logging equipment, and I watched as the timber sale documents got longer. As more and more regulations were piled on, it killed the logging industry, which was the backbone of this state. Now I work part-time test-driving trucks for Freightliner. Over-regulation of truck particulates has made fuel mileage and power go down and operating costs go up. It looks like history is going to repeat itself with the Portland Harbor project. If the river is shut down due to construction, the dining ships that are on the river all the time will never be able to move. That is jobs and money that would be lost. On top of all that, the cleanup might cost over a billion dollars, which local residents would have to cover. I am retired, so tax increases would affect me quite a bit.

The cleanup plan should be revised based on input from the community. A bureaucrat in Washington, D.C. might fly out and spend a couple days here, but we live here. We know that if certain things are shut down, there is a trickle-down effect on the economy. We know that there are people moving in here now who can't find work as it is. State officials live here, but their focus isn't here. It's on how much money they can get from the federal government, which still comes out of our pocketbooks. Local residents are the best equipped to come up with a reasonable plan that protects the environment without hurting the economy.

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